

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2139

C O N F I D E N T I A L MUSCAT 0618

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MU

SUBJECT: INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL

REF: MUSCAT 0603

1. PLEASE ADVISE IHC MANAGEMENT NEW YORK CONTENTS THIS MESSAGE WHICH BASED ENTIRELY ON REMARKS BY QAIS ZAWAWI, VICE CHAIRMAN OF FINANCE COMMITTEE, TO AMBASSADOR AT PRIVATE MEETING IN ZAWAWI'S HOME LAST EVENING.

2. ZAWAWI SAID HE HAS BEEN READING THE FILES, CONSULTING WITH MINCOMMUNICATIONS RAJAB, AND LEARNING ABOUT VARIOUS PARTIES INVOLVED (CONTRACTOR, QUANTITY SURVEYOR, DESIGNERS, IHC, ETC.). HE INTENDS THAT THE MEETING STARTING MAY 25 WILL GET INTO ALL ASPECTS OF PROJECT. HE EMPHASIZED THAT HIS MANDATE FROM THE SULTAN IS TO DO HIS UTMOST IN WORKING WITH ALL PARTIES PRESENTLY INVOLVED TO ADVANCE THE PROJECT, SURMOUNTING ALL PAST DIFFERENCES IF POSSIBLE. A KEY ELEMENT IN THIS MANDATE IS HM'S WISH FOR IHC TO REMAIN ASSOCIATED IN THE PROJECT. ZAWAWI SAID HE WOULD NEED EVERYONE'S FLEXIBLE, OPEN-MINDED COOPERATION IF THIS IS TO SUCCEED. IT WAS CLEAR THAT THERE ARE MANY COMPLICATED ASPECTS. HE EARNESTLY HOPES IHC WILL GO THE EXTRA MILE IF AND WHENEVER IT CAN. HE NOTED THAT THE BASIC AGREEMENTS MADE BY HM WITH IHC WERE MADE SEVERAL YEARS AGO, IN MODERN OMAN'S INFANCY. SURELY IT COULD BE HOPED THAT IHC WOULD NOT RIGIDLY INSIST ON THE STRICTEST, WORD-FOR-WORD INTERPRETATION OF ITS AGREEMENTS DOWN TO THE LAST LETTER, BUT INSTEAD BE FLEXIBLE

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ENOUGH TO MAKE ALLOWANCE FOR LOCAL SITUATION AND NOT INSIST

ON AN "ABSOLUTELY STANDARD" INTERPRETATION OF EVERY ARTICLE AS THOUGH THIS WERE A HIGHLY DEVELOPED NATION.

3. HE HOPED THE IHC REPS WOULD ALLOW SAY 4 TO 7 DAYS FOR MEETINGS IN MUSCAT. HE SAW THE PROCESS NOT AS ONE OR TWO MASS MEETINGS OF ALL PARTIES, BUT PERHAPS AS A SERIES OF DISCUSSIONS, SOME INVOLVING ONLY HIMSELF AND ONE OF THE PARTIES SEPARATELY, OVER SEVERAL DAYS TIME. WHEN AMBASSADOR MENTIONED THAT RAJAB HAD SUGGESTED SEPARATE MEETING WITH IHC BEFORE MAY 25, ZAWAWI RESPONDED HE HAD NO OBJECTION AND SUPPORTED THE IDEA IF IT WOULD HELP SET A POSITIVE TONE FOR HIS OWN FRAMEWORK OF TALKS.

4. ZAWAWI MENTIONED HE HAS ENGAGED SERVICES OF A FORMER IHC EMPLOYEE, WHOM HE DID NOT NAME, WHO LEFT IHC AMICABLY LAST YEAR AND WILL BE SERVING AS HIS OWN ADVISOR ON THE PROJECT FROM NOW ON SO THAT HE WILL HAVE BENEFIT OF HOTEL EXPERTISE.

5. AMBASSADOR PROMISED TO RELAY ZAWAWI COMMENTS TO IHC, AND REITERATED THAT WHILE USG AND EMBASSY ARE KEEN TO HAVE PROJECT SUCCEED TO EVERYONE'S SATISFACTION, WE ARE UNFAMILIAR WITH ITS DETAILS AND DO NOT CONSIDER IT APPROPRIATE TO GET INVOLVED IN SUBSTANCE OF THE MATTER. ZAWAWI SAID HE FULLY APPRECIATED THIS.

6. INCIDENTALLY, ONE PATRICK DONALD BOARD TELEPHONED FROM DUBAI SAYING HE ALSO WOULD BE REPRESENTING IHC AT COMING MEETINGS AND ASKING FOR NOC FOR OVERLAND ENTRY. MINCOMMUNICATIONS, WHICH ALREADY HOLDS BURGUND AND RAPPOPORT NOCS, IS ARRANGING THIS AND IS AWAITING ETA INFORMATION ON ALL CONCERNED, ALSO WHETHER HOTEL RESERVATIONS REQUIRED.
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